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WHY GENERAL SHERMAN DECLINED THE NOMINATION IN 1884.*

BEING A LETTER, HITHERTO UNPUBLISHED, FROM GENERAL W. T.
SHERMAN TO UNITED STATES SENATOR J. R. DOOLITTLE,
OF WISCONSIN.

912 GARRISON AVENUE, ST. LOUIS, MO.,
June 10, 1884.

HON. J. R. DOOLITTLE,

RACINE, WIS.

My Dear Sir: This morning's mail brought me your letter of the 8th, and, though packing my trunk for a trip to Southwest Missouri—Carthage, Joplin, etc.—in fulfillment of a promise made my old soldiers two months ago, I think I had better answer you.

The Law compelled my retirement from the command of the Army because I was sixty-four years of age. I favored the law, because the average man of sixty-four or sixty-five is usually incapacitated for military service, which demands not only mental strength but physical. I had seen so many good officers cling to their commissions long after it was plain to all except themselves that their day had passed—conspicuously so Scott, Bonneville, etc.—that I really wanted to retire whilst I had sense enough, and before I could be subjected to the hints and flings that Sherman, naturally eccentric, was becoming old and obstructive. If too old to command an army of twenty-five thousand men, of course I

*Senator Doolittle was one of those who ardently desired that General Sherman should become a candidate for the Presidency. Feeling confident that the nomination of the great commander was assured, the Senator wrote him a letter offering suggestions as to points which it seemed desirable to cover in his letter of acceptance. General Sherman replied that he had forbidden the use of his name in the Convention, and Senator Doolittle responded in a communication of some length, in which he expressed great regret at the General's decision, and pointed out the services which the veteran might have rendered to the country as President. The letter printed above is General Sherman's answer to this communication.—~~Error.~~

was too old to be the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States. Therefore I notified my own brother, and all who were entitled to my confidence, that I must not be used by any political convention for *its* purpose and convenience.

During the Convention at Chicago I was notified by men high in authority that, in case there should be a deadlock as between the two strong candidates, Arthur and Blaine, my name would surely be used, whether I consented or not.

I may be eccentric, but I think I am not a fool, an ass, to be used by others at their will, and I simply confided to a friend, in position to act, that they had better not make too free use of my name, as I had old-fashioned ideas of freedom and the right of every man to shape his own destiny; that I was not in the habit of calling a council of war to throw off on it the responsibility, but had already decided for myself, and advised the Convention that if it used my name without my consent I might answer in terms which would damage it as well as myself. Of course, my name was dropped, and Blaine was nominated.

I know Blaine well and have since he was a boy of ten years of age. He is talented, as all admit, and as honest as the time calls for. He has been heavily taxed, not only by his immediate family, but by brothers, sisters, cousins and aunts, and he has been to them most kind and generous, as I *know*. Had he limited his action to his Congressional salary, his brothers and sisters would have been dependent on others, and he was forced to embark in private enterprises. He favored, rightfully, the building of the great Trans-Continental Roads, Congress aiding by the grant of alternate sections out for ten miles, doubling the price of the remainder, just as you or I or any honest owner would gladly do to increase the value of the general estate. I don't know that Blaine made any profit thereby, but I hope he did. This clamor against the Pacific Railroad Grants is to me the veriest demagoguery, for in 1865 I would have freely given all of Nebraska, Wyoming, Utah and Nevada, yea, been willing to throw in New Mexico, to any corporation which would have guaranteed to build *one* Pacific Road; now we have *four*. And they add more strength to the Union of this nation than all the Politics of both Republican and Democratic parties in the last fifty years.

Logan was a good soldier, and Blaine and Logan are fair can-

didates for the Republicans. Now let the Democrats put out a ticket of their best representative men.

And then fight it out.

It don't make much difference which wins—neither can do any good. The real question is, Which will do the *least* harm?

Our people insist on being governed by Parties full of virtuous professions, but slack of performance; and the time is opportune for a full and fair fight as between them. I am not entitled to a vote, and therefore disqualified from expressing my opinion, but I surely do account myself happy and fortunate in escaping so easily a danger I dreaded.

With respect, your Friend,

W. T. SHERMAN.